



# GILA NEWSLETTER

6TH EDITION

June 29, 2002

## Commander's Corner

June quickly came, and now it is quickly coming to an end. Our mission here keeps us very busy, which in turn truly does make the hands of the clock move faster. It's hard for me to accurately express my admiration and respect for the soldiers of this battalion and the daily dedication to duty each soldier performs without complaint. Each and every day the Gila soldiers welcome the challenge of daily missions and the fast-pace life of our Kosovo mission. Although sometimes our missions are not the most glamorous, they remain to be incredible important. Through it all, the Gila soldier consistently performs his/her duty without fail.

Thankfully, we have not had any accidents or injuries to speak of thus far. Safety continues to be our top priority in the conduct of any mission. Leaders and soldiers alike understand that being a Safety Officer is everyone's responsibility. I would ask our soldiers and family members in the rear to be safety conscience everyday. The summer season possesses its own threats to the well being of the Gila family. Please think about your actions, plan ahead, and remember that safety MUST come first.

I would especially like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our Rear Detachment and Family Readiness Group. While the spotlight may shine on our actions here in Kosovo, it's your support and constant concern that makes our mission success possible. Your trials and tribulations often go unrecognized by many, but not by us. The morale of our unit is directly linked to Schweinfurt- your efforts and concern for the Gila extended family make our mission achievable down here. Keep up the excellent work. We stand united as one team during this deployment.

Lastly, I would like to focus on one particular venue that is an immediate morale booster- Video Teleconferences (VTC). We have conducted several of these VTCs in the last few weeks. I think they are a great opportunity for soldiers to see and interact with family members in the rear. The actual schedules for these VTCs need to be formulated here with us and all changes must go through our communication section. I have tasked the Rear Detachment leadership with ensuring we have a battalion military representative present at these mass VTCs to serve as liaisons for spouses and assist in the process. Please, if you have any questions about how to get involved with these VTCs, speak with your military spouse over here first. Soldiers must sign up and schedule an appearance on this end. I trust this opportunity will continue to aid our Gila families in dealing with this challenging deployment.

Again, I sincerely appreciate your support and efforts. Together we will achieve mission success and a safe redeployment. We continue to miss you dearly.

First to Cross!

LTC Nathaniel Idlet

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## HHC/9E: Headhunters

Despite the temperatures being in the high 90's, the mighty Headhunters, continues to provide service and support throughout Task Force 9E. Soldiers from support platoon continue to provide great support to A/94th Engineers as the construction project along Route Lion continues. They provide the much needed fuel and medical assets required for mission accomplishment.

SSG Wilson and SPC Cook just returned from Haz-12, which was held at Camp Monteith through a distance learning video teleconference. SSG Carroll is currently attending Intel 34 located at Vilseck.



Opportunities to train with soldiers from a different country don't come very often but fortunately SPC Villanueva

and SPC Higginson from Support, SPC Edwards and SPC Schlegel from Maintenance, SSG Vasquez (Battalion Reenlistment NCO), and LT Phillips (BN S2), had the opportunity to get some hands on experience with different mines and other explosives while training with Russian EOD at Kamenica. (SPC Edwards is shown above on a Russian vehicle during the training).

All work and no play makes Joe a dull soldier. Lucky for us we have some talented Headhunters among our ranks. 1SG Thomas along with SPC Haffner from Support platoon, participated in the Show Time at Bondsteel talent show. 1SG Thomas got the party started by singing the song "America the Beautiful". His deep voice and loud vocals roused a spontaneous standing ovation from the crowd.



*Russian soldiers demonstrate their mine detecting equipment as a U.S. translator looks on during training at Kamenica on Saturday, 22 June*

Along with the 1SG, SPC Haffner also received a standing ovation. Her skills on the guitar along with her singing voice proved that the Headhunters not only rule Camp Bondsteel athletically but also musically.

Our company maintenance focus on Monday was NBC equipment. SPC Makar was especially thrilled about the maintenance focus, because he is our NBC expert. He squared away the company by providing some quality training on the proper maintenance of this critical but often overlooked equipment.

With the current missions and the many more to come the Headhunters will continue to shoot, move, and communicate with professionalism and motivation. We'll continue to strike hard and fast whenever called upon.

**HEADHUNTERS!**



*SPC Makar expounds on the finer points of NBC protective mask maintenance to First Sergeant Thomas on Command Maintenance Day, 24 June*





## A/9E: Breach Hell!

Another busy week for the Apaches in MNB(E). This week Alpha Company simultaneously conducted a weapons training range (1<sup>st</sup> Platoon), escort missions (2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon), reacted to a QRF call from MNB(E) headquarters (3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon), and conducted a Quarterly Training Brief (HQ Platoon). As the weeks turn into months, it is apparent that the men in Alpha Company continue to raise their personal standards and get the job done.

1<sup>st</sup> platoon began their second week of training cycle this week. On Tuesday, they went to the local range, Falcon 8, and conducted hasty check point and secure route operations. On Wednesday, they conducted Preliminary Marksmanship Instruction on M249 and M240B at Camp Bondsteel. On Thursday, they conducted a M249 and M240B ranges at Falcon 8. All soldiers from 1<sup>st</sup> platoon are now qualified on both weapon systems, making the platoon more effective well into the future.



*SGT McSwain and PFC Rogers pulling security while training to set up a checkpoint*



*PFC Jefferson prepares to shoot the M249 while SGT McSwain ensures the range is conducted safely*

This week 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was busy executing escort missions for TFF personnel. 27 June was a good day for three members of 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. First, PFC Bradley competed in the TFF Soldier of the Quarter Board. Results are not posted yet, but we will let you know how it went next week. Second, SFC Maxwell reenlisted in a small ceremony near the CBS Chapel. SFC Maxwell has served in the Army for 17 years. His professional attitude has been instrumental in 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon's success during the KFOR rotation. Third, PV2 Wuenn received a Brigade coin from COL Hoffpauir for his outstanding motivation and hard work during the first guard duty cycle. PV2 Wuenn is new soldier who consistently performs his duties above standard.



*2LT Kutsko reenlists SFC Maxwell while SGTs Solomon and Washburn provide the Color Guard*

This week 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon remained poised to respond to cordon and search missions and vehicle searches across MNB(E) as the Camp Bondsteel quick reaction force (QRF) platoon. Training conducted included basic map reading skills with a CBS land navigation course created by SSG Brokmeier, mine sweeping operations, basic demolitions and dismounted breaching. These skills will help prepare our sappers for an Engineer Qualification Table competition planned for October. SGT Bingerman returned from leave in Sofia, Bulgaria thoroughly refreshed and SFC Villa spent much of the latter part of the week preparing a Company wide Olympics event to be held this Saturday. We'll let you all know how it went in our next edition.

Headquarters platoon continues its daily juggling act while steadily preparing for the future. SPC Letcher was welcomed back to work this week, after completing Log 73, a supply class that will help him perform his duties more efficiently. Newly-wed SPC Tromp departed to spend a short time with his wife in Sofia, Bulgaria. Overall, the HQ Platoon has effectively planned and executed another safe week in Kosovo.

Another week closer to completing the mission...  
Breach Hell!



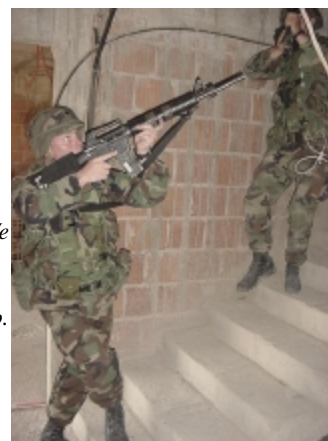


## B/9E: Outlaws

What were the Outlaws doing this week? This week we took some additional time to miss our families. We have hit the 2 month mark, and each new month brings joy of getting shorter, but also is a reminder that we are still here. We have had 3 Chaplains going out on patrols, and they report that the company continues to have high morale and the soldiers remain motivated. Our current mission is to map the businesses in the city of Gnjilane. This is a monumental task since there are 90,000 people in the town, and quite possibly over 600 businesses. SPC Bladow's team met with the local fire department to during the mapping process. They were greeted by the fire chief, who smokes more than the rest of population combined. SPC Gomez assisted SPC Smith in calling in a MEDIVAC helicopter in the city for a training exercise. 2nd Platoon actually had the opportunity to land a MEDIVAC helicopter in the center of the city and fly a soldier back to Camp Monteith. SPC Lamb and PFC Meredith took some time off of mapping the city to practice some MOUT training on a local building. This week we are going to reenlist SPC Clay on top of the Gnjilane Grain Tower, which is about 10 stories tall, and I've been designated as the RTO. The RTO is a job that gets quite a bit of respect around here, since he has to carry the heaviest load during patrols. The RTO probably carries about 45lbs worth of equipment for 8 hours while walking around in 90 degree weather. I'm not sure if I could live up to the 8 hours, but will try my best to get to the top of the grain tower. The Outlaws bid a farewell to SGT Garrison, SPC Cheramie, and SPC Vasquez. We will miss them, but wish them the best.

God bless,  
CPT Bill Lash

*SPC Lamb (left) and PFC Meredith (right) do CTT MOUT training in downtown Gnjilane. We are incorporating CTT training into daily patrols to keep our soldiers basic combat skills sharp.*



*SPC Bladow meets with a member of the local Gnjilane fire department to improve relations in the event of an unexpected emergency that may require KFOR and local emergency services to work together.*



*SPC Gomez is assisting SPC Smith in calling in a 9-Line MEDAVAC. For familiarization and training, the objective was to ensure all soldiers are able to call in a proper MEDAVAC request. This is part of the current CTT training to refresh and sharpen soldier skills.*





## C/9E: Dawgs of War

The Dawgs of War continued to remain alert on guard duty. This past week marked the change to a new schedule with Dawgs pulling much longer shifts on the guard towers. The temperature approached the mid-ninety degree threshold and our soldiers weathered being on their feet and scanning the 7.5 mile perimeter of Camp Bondsteel with few complaints.

Besides the guard towers on Camp Bondsteel, our soldiers provided access control for one of the gates. They searched all vehicles and cleared all weapons prior to them entering the installation. Furthermore, they protected military buses and routine convoys off camp to ensure the safety of other Americans and associated Allies. The work proved tedious but was highly important in protecting lives.



*SFC Rodriguez leads the Company during a Battalion NCO run*

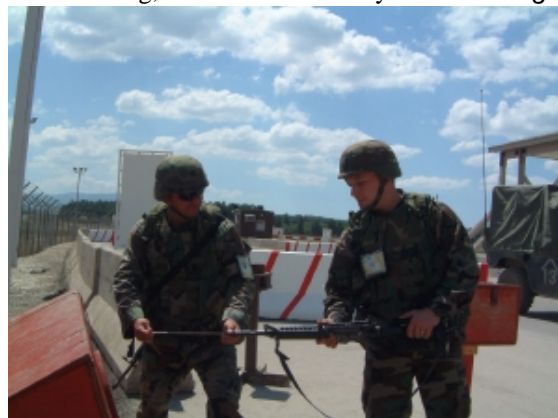
During this phase, the officers stayed extremely busy with engineer technical missions. Lieutenant Parranto conducted a reconnaissance and analysis of a road that had collapsed under the weight of a heavy Army vehicle; while, Lieutenant Christopher analyzed blasting a mountainside to expand a rural route connecting two villages. Additionally, Lieutenants Christopher and Lavicka joined up with Task Force 1-26 Infantry to conduct reconnaissance missions along the FYROM border to close down possible smuggling routes. While doing so they proved instrumental in identifying three armed insurgents, capturing one and policing up the identity papers of another. On a different day, they isolated a suspicious vehicle with contraband. Needless to say, their mission was prolonged by all the excitement they had!



*1LT Parranto receives a coin and certificate of appreciation from the 501<sup>st</sup> Greek Battalion Commander*

The Dawgs' hard work has not gone unrecognized. This past week SGT Freeman and SPC McMillan received coins from the Brigade Commander for their outstanding work during the past month. CPL Tuthill also received a Brigade coin for winning the Battalion NCO of the Month Board; he competed in the Task Force Falcon NCO of the Month board and we are still waiting for the results. Additionally, the Greek Battalion Commander recognized Lieutenants Parranto and West for the Company's work with them during previously conducted traffic control point missions.

Finally, the Company inventoried 25% of all its property as part of the Army Supply Program. The process took the whole week and used up what little free time the soldiers had off guard duty. I was deeply humbled this week at the commitment to duty the company showed in conducting maintenance. I had to make soldiers stop inspecting their vehicles during their sleep time because they needed rest prior to taking guard. Each soldier did so voluntarily and on his own accord; it is no wonder why the company performs so excellently. Our soldiers take pride and work together to make our missions successful. As they do so with your continued backing, I want to reiterate my thanks! **Dawg 6**



*SGT Sanchez clears 2LT West's weapon at the gate to Camp Bondsteel*







## A/94E: Warriors

Soldiers in A/94E continue to maintain, construct, train, and do great things here in Kosovo! This past week was no exception.

Construction on RTE LION continues to run ahead of schedule thanks to SSG Daisy's outstanding leadership and his soldiers' motivation and work ethic. They are working with the local Kosovo TMK, the equivalent of our National Guard, on the project emplacing a culvert. This experience continues to foster great teamwork between our soldiers and the TMK members as well as honing both organizations' construction abilities.

Those soldiers not constructing out on RTE LION continue to do great things in preparation for our upcoming operations. SSG Kenny's squad is currently preparing to upgrade approximately 24 km of road so that HMMWVs can travel without restriction. This past week they have been focusing on their equipment's maintenance posture so that their mission will go as well as their range upgrades a few weeks ago.

SSG Taitague and his vertical constructors continue their recovery. Their Camp Rock decking project is complete and they are setting their sights on completing a six-foot high platform to be placed around a radar system. They are excited to get out in sector and construct.

As for maintenance, they continue to exceed all standards and keep A/94E's equipment fully functional. Their hard work and technical expertise allow of our constructors to go out and perform these construction missions above standard and ahead of schedule. Congratulations to PFC Snodgrass for his recent promotion!



*Soldiers constructing out on RTE LION*



*SPCs Gonzales & Alsup receive EN BDE coins from COL Hoffpauir*

Significant soldier contributions from this week include seven soldiers for their tobacco cessation: 1LT Beaulieu, SSG Hancock, SPC Alsup, SPC Gladue, SPC Meyer, SPC Gonzales, and PV2 Carter. These soldiers continue to live a healthy lifestyle! LTC Burcham, the 94<sup>th</sup> EBC(H) commander, visited our soldiers and recognized the following soldiers with a 94<sup>th</sup> ECB(H) coin for their motivation, positive attitude, and outstanding performance: PV2 Carter, PV2 Casallo, PFC Talley, PFC Sanchez, PFC Brown, PFC Thomason, and SFC Mitchell. SPC Gonzales and SPC Alsup also received a 1<sup>st</sup> ID EN BDE coin from COL Hoffpauir, the 1<sup>st</sup> ID Engineer Brigade commander for outstanding motivation, dedication to duty, and exemplary performance. Awesome job!

The company also participated in an NCO-led battalion run, with no officers, to show esprit de corps and emphasize the team concept. The run was led by CSM Balch, the 1<sup>st</sup> ID EN BDE CSM, and CSM Rather, the TF 9<sup>th</sup> EN BN CSM. Hooah!

As another week ends, the Warriors continue to leave their mark and are one step closer to truly becoming a highly effective, cohesive team!

Alpha Warriors!





## 737th EOD

Aftershock 737 continues to conduct all missions assigned, providing excellent support to the entire MNB (E) sector. 737<sup>th</sup> is continuing its partnership with other EOD units from other countries. This week 737<sup>th</sup> visited the Finland Battalion in order to establish a working relationship, to learn their techniques, and to show them our techniques. We also visited the Russian camp to find out how they operate. Both visits were very beneficial and the teams learned a lot. We also had an Engineer soldier take an EOD entry exam in an effort to go to EOD School. EOD School is held at Eglin A.F.B, Florida. The school is long and difficult. The rewards of joining EOD are \$150.00 per month in Demolition Pay, and possibly, hopefully soon to be enacted, career incentive pay. Based on duty position and schools attended, you can earn up to \$650 extra a month. You are also placed in a small field of operators that are very professional and competent in what they do. This field is obviously dangerous, and the military invests a great deal of time, training and money to ensure that its EOD technicians are competent. The school is a PCS move, which last about eight months plus another month of Army specific training. To learn more about EOD School go to the link below <http://www.cnet.navy.mil/eods/command/index2.html>

### Prerequisites are:

GM 105, able to obtain Top Secret clearance, 11111-11121 physical profile code, pass TAP suit test, 5-10 months out from DEROS, able to carry 90lbs 100 yards, no UCMJ, SGT or below, CPT or below, 2 years active service, U.S citizen, normal color vision, not claustrophobic, no flags, no history of drug abuse, no psychiatric treatment and no civil conviction.

To learn more about how to get into the school- contact any member of 737<sup>th</sup> EOD Aftershock.

CPT Green



*SPC Merchain taking EOD entry exam test*



*EOD and 9th EN learning about Russian tools and techniques*



## Scenes from KFOR 4A

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*Alpha 9E soldier, PV2 Curl marks a suspected ant-tank mine during mine sweep training*



*SGT Freeman and SPC McMillan receive coins from the Brigade Commander*



*LT Olson (HHC XO) is hard at work. No really, he is.*

Editor in Chief  
The Gila Adjutant

TASK FORCE 9TH ENGINEER (C)

